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TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [UN](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: DARFUR - BRAZEN CARJACKINGS BRING NGOS TO TIPPING POINT

REFS: A) KHARTOUM 1511 B) KHARTOUM 1390

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Summary

1. (U) Recent attacks on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working throughout Darfur, including USAID partners CARE and World Vision, have impacted the delivery of humanitarian services. Brazen daytime carjackings in Nyala town, the capital of South Darfur, have prompted the UN to impose a 14-day restriction on travel outside the town limits and within the town as well. The travel restriction will impact operations in the four internally displaced person (IDP) camps near Nyala, Al Salam, Kalma, Otash, and El Shereif. At the very same time and as the Sudanese government, armed opposition groups, and other international actors prepare for the October peace negotiations in Tripoli, security incidents are increasing and tensions within IDP camps are rising. The deteriorated security situation in Darfur is impeding access and delivery of humanitarian assistance in several of Darfur's largest IDP camps, including Kalma camp in South Darfur where reconciliation discussions are currently underway. End Summary.

2. (U) Following the September 20 ambush of World Vision near Bulbul Tisbago, South Darfur, in which three staff sustained gunshot wounds (REF A), relief agencies in South Darfur continue to face violence during carjackings and robberies. The repeated daytime carjacking of NGO vehicles in Nyala town has caused humanitarian agencies to re-evaluate their security and travel procedures and has hindered their ability to implement humanitarian programs. From September 18 to October 1, at least six separate incidents of carjacking and banditry hindered USAID NGO partners' ability to implement humanitarian assistance programs in South Darfur. During this period, several incidents of violence against humanitarian agencies also occurred in North and West Darfur.

NGO Staff Abducted in Carjacking

3. (U) On September 30 at approximately 1500 hours local time, a CARE vehicle was carjacked in Nyala town, only five minutes away from the NGO's office. At the time of the carjacking, the driver and a Sudanese national staff member were en route from the CARE office to the CARE warehouse to pick up spare parts to fix a broken water pump in Kalma IDP camp. At the CARE warehouse, unidentified armed men stole the vehicle and abducted the two NGO staff. The vehicle was a Landcruiser, but not a Buffalo, which is easily converted for military use. On October 2, the driver and staff member were located in Umm Salaya, after having walked for six hours to a police station, and returned safely to Nyala following three days without food. Field reports indicate that the bandits ran out of fuel, tried to steal fuel from villagers who chased them, and got a flat tire. Of particular concern are reports that indicate that the bandits argued whether or not to kidnap the staff members or leave them to return to the village. For months, aid agencies have feared that carjacking trends will escalate into kidnapping for ransom.

14. (SBU) CARE has temporarily grounded vehicles in Nyala town and surrounding areas. At a meeting with the South Darfur Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) on October 1, CARE stated the carjacking incident would have implications for the NGO's water, sanitation, and hygiene programs in all four Nyala-area camps (Al Salam, Otash, Kalma, and El Sherief) On October 2, CARE told USAID staff that it intends to scale-back operations and reduce staffing levels in South Darfur. The NGO's staff are severely shaken up. On October 2, CARE drivers refused to work out of fear of another carjacking. USAID is in communication with CARE leadership to determine if the scale-back in activities will affect CARE's ability to truck water into Al Salam camp and maintain existing water points in Kalma, Otash, and El Sherief camps. Further, the scale-back will reduce CARE's ability to monitor the water programs, ensuring that community water committees are distributing water fairly and that vulnerable groups have access to safe drinking water.

15. (SBU) In discussion with USAID staff in Khartoum, CARE reported that the HAC in Nyala has implied that NGO staff (both CARE and other NGOs who have experienced carjackings) are believed to be the ones responsible for stealing the vehicles. The South Darfur Wali

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stated that NGOs brought these incidents on themselves because they are sympathetic to the opposition groups. The Wali went on to accuse NGOs of failing to limit their hiring to drivers cleared and recommended by the authorities, as well as for refusing police escorts and armed protection. This incident follows the recent expulsion of CARE's country director (REF B), adding yet another challenge to an already weary organization.

14-Day UN Travel Restriction Issued

16. (U) On October 1, the UN issued a 14-day travel restriction prohibiting UN vehicles and staff from traveling outside of Nyala town. In addition, the UN advised that travel within the town should be limited to essential travel on 'Q1QRQQed by a Sudanese government police escort going to Al Salam IDP camp. The only other exception to the travel restriction is for official convoys proceeding to Kalma IDP camp to pursue reconciliation of the ongoing tensions.

17. (U) The travel restrictions apply to all UN agencies. Although the UN cannot enforce this requirement on NGOs, they strongly recommend that NGOs follow the travel restrictions. The USAID field officer based in Nyala reports that most NGOs are adhering to this requirement. Previously, some NGOs were able to maintain a limited presence in camps declared as UN no-go areas by sending Sudanese national staff for short periods of time. [Note: USAID staff in Darfur adhere to UN travel policies. End note.]

Access Restricted to Al Salam IDP Camp

18. (U) On September 16, unidentified men shot at USAID partner CARE's vehicle on the Nyala-Al Salam road and attempted to carjack the vehicle. Shots hit the engine block, but the NGO staff were not injured and returned safely to Nyala. Following this attempted carjacking, NGOs working in the camp requested a police escort for aid convoys traveling to Al Salam. The police escorts are scheduled to meet at the police checkpoint at 0930 hours for the camp and return at 1400 hours. However, USAID field staff based in Nyala report that the police escort policy is not working effectively. On September 25 and 26, police escorts failed to arrive, delaying planned visits. On September 30, the police escorted NGOs to the camp but never returned to escort the agencies back to Nyala.

19. (U) Humedica International is the camp coordinator for Al Salam camp, where more than 35,000 IDPs currently reside. USAID funds CARE's water, sanitation, and hygiene programs in the camp, including the delivery of water by truck. USAID also funds the International Medical Corps to provide health services in Al Salam camp.

110. (U) In January 2007, Al Salam hosted approximately 3,500 IDPs, according to Action Contre la Faim (ACF). Seven months later, the camp population increased to more than 35,000 people newly displaced from fighting and insecurity in Buram locality, South Darfur. Relief agencies responded to the increased displacement through expansion of existing services, but the population remains particularly vulnerable. In May 2007, ACF reported 23 percent global acute malnutrition (GAM) and 2.8 percent severe acute malnutrition (SAM) rates in Al Salam camp among children between 6 and 59 months old. Both rates indicated that malnutrition levels have exceeded emergency thresholds.

111. (U) Although limited access to Al Salam camp is currently being achieved through use of police escorts, the deteriorating security conditions are impacting the ability of NGOs to provide even basic services. Even when police escorts are available, the time left for

program implementation in the camp is only 2 or 3 hours daily. Efforts to improve the availability of safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, provide primary health care services, and identify and treat IDPs suffering from malnutrition can be expected to be scaled-back and delayed. As a result of the police escort policy and limited program time, ACF reports that it is unable to check on all recovering malnutrition patients and provide follow up

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care due to the limited time in camp.

Kalma IDP Camp

¶12. (U) Since September 6, the UN has declared Kalma IDP camp a no-go area due to ongoing ethnic tension and insecurity in the camp. Kalma camp hosts nearly 92,000 IDPs and is known as one of the most politicized and volatile camps in Darfur.

¶13. (U) Field sources confirmed that four Fur IDPs were killed on September 29 in sector 4 of the camp. On September 30, the Sudanese government police transported the bodies to Nyala. Unconfirmed reports indicate that one of the IDPs may have participated in the September 6 murders of four suspects, who had attempted to carjack a UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) vehicle in Kalma camp. In addition, unconfirmed reports indicate that 2 to 4 other Fur IDPs were also killed outside the camp on September 29.

¶14. (U) The root cause of the violence is ongoing tensions between Fur and Zaghawa IDPs residing in the camp. Throughout September, the UN and NGOs have made repeated attempts to meet with IDP community leaders and resolve the tensions. As of October 1, USAID field staff report that reconciliation meetings in Kalma Camp have not resulted in reduced tensions or increased access to the camp for all agencies.

¶15. (U) Since Kalma camp has been designated a no-go area for nearly one month, the September food aid distribution was repeatedly delayed until October 1. In addition, USAID partner CARE has had severely reduced access to the camp, impacting its ability to implement and monitor water, sanitation, and hygiene activities for the camp.

Comments

¶16. (U) While carjacking has become routine in Darfur and insecurity a daily risk for aid organizations, the recent upsurge in violence against humanitarian workers and tensions in IDP camps are severe and has humanitarian aid organizations seriously considering the viability of remaining in South Darfur. With the end of the rainy season in September, a time when carjackings and fighting subside due to the limited ability to travel on water-damaged roads, many aid agencies expected a return to business-as-usual in carjacking and banditry. However, the number of incidents in the last week, the prolonged abduction of two CARE staff, and the recent shooting of World Vision staff raise new concerns about the trends in violence and risks that aid workers face in implementing the world's largest humanitarian operation.

¶17. (SBU) Many humanitarian organizations also predict an increase in politicization and violence in IDP camps and other areas in Darfur. As the October peace negotiations approach, tensions in IDP camps are rising and aid organizations are already reducing operations as a result. Recent examples of the heightened tensions and politicization include, ethnic clashes in Kalma camp and violent demonstrations by IDPs supporting the Sudan Liberation Army faction led by Abdul Wahid in Zalingei and El Fasher. As a result, the UN has issued a warning for aid agencies to avoid Abu Shouk and As Salaam IDP camps in El Fasher. Camp coordinating organizations in El Fasher have advised delegations to avoid Abu Shouk and As Salaam camps and humanitarian organizations to limit movements in these camps.

¶18. (U) Reducing life-saving humanitarian assistance for IDPs at this time is particularly problematic, as malnutrition and poor water, sanitation, and hygiene services are urgent concerns that need to be addressed. In addition, populations in camps are entirely dependent on food aid and services that relief agencies provide. USAID has observed that its partners are already stretched to the limit and most have suffered repeated attacks on staff, including sexual assault, gunfire, abductions, physical assault, and robbery. While UN agencies and NGOs have not announced the closure of Darfur operations, the constantly eroding access and recurring temporary program suspensions have real humanitarian consequences for the populations dependent on these services.

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